

Cataracts

Questions

When is my cataract 'ripe' enough for surgery?

This is a common myth. The decision to have your cataract removed is based on how much a cataract is interfering with vision, and not on waiting until a cataract gets worse.

Are cataracts removed with lasers?

Yes. You now have the choice to have your cataracts removed using the latest laser technology, known as Laser-assisted Cataract Surgery.

Do cataracts grow back?

No. However, very rarely a different secondary cataract may develop following surgery. The good news is this can be fixed easily by your eye surgeon with a painless and quick procedure.

What are cataracts?

When the normally clear lens inside your eye becomes cloudy, this is known as a cataract. Having a cataract is like looking through a dirty window. They range from very small to large cataracts that can cause vision loss.

What causes cataracts?

Most cataracts are a normal change due to advancing age but they can be caused by eye injuries, toxic chemicals or diseases like diabetes. Smoking and exposure to ultraviolet light are also risk factors that contribute to the development of cataracts.

Who gets cataracts?

While most cataracts are found in people over the age of 50 years, cataracts can occur in those younger than 50.

How will I know if I have cataracts?

In their early stages, cataracts may develop in one eye before the other, without pain and with little effect on your vision. Signs of advancing cataracts include blurred vision, sensitivity to light especially at night, and a feeling of looking through a film.

How does an optometrist diagnose cataracts?

As part of your eye examination, your optometrist will check the health of your eyes. This includes using a special microscope to look at the lens inside your eye for any sign of cataract formation. Using these results and information from other tests, optometrists are able to tell if you have cataracts.

Can cataracts be treated?

Many people with small cataracts that are not advancing can be helped with new prescription glasses and a regular eye health examination.

When cataracts begin to affect your vision, interfering with your ability to work or drive, your optometrist will talk to you about the benefits of referring you to an ophthalmologist, or eye surgeon, to consider surgery to remove the cataracts. This operation is generally uncomplicated and has a very high success rate although, like all surgery, complications can occur.

How will I know when I need to have cataracts removed?

Because cataracts often progress slowly, you may not know you have a cataract or whether your cataract is making your vision worse. The best way to monitor your cataract is with a regular eye examination with your optometrist who will help you to maximise your vision, make sure your vision is safe for driving and talk to you about the right time for surgery to have the cataract removed.

Regular eye examinations are your best protection against vision loss from cataracts.

Your optometrist

